

Lecture Circuit: Talk Isn't

NEW YORK (AP)—Abbie Hoffman is down, Buffalo Bob is up and Ralph Nader reigns as superstar this year on the college lecture circuit.

"The radical speakers are off now. They had their run," said Robert Walker, whose American Program Bureau in Boston books more than half the people who speak on American college campuses. "Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin are still getting dates, but they are not in demand like last year."

Politics—radical or straight usually won't fill an auditorium. Black Panther Bobby Seale and former Tennessee Sen. Albert Gore recently spoke at Stanford University in California. Seale drew 200 people in an auditorium that seats 500; Gore drew 200 in a 400-seat hall.

An issue alone won't draw too well. Georgia Tech has had programs on birth control and abortion without name speakers. "They drew 100 to 150 people," said program director David K. Neff. "A name speaker will draw 800 to 1,000 people anytime."

A name speaker with an issue is the best bet to pack the house. Nader on conservatism, Dick Gregory on racism and Dr. Benjamin Spock on the war have filled campus auditoriums from Maine to Oregon.

"We want to get away from strictly political speakers," said Boodie Venetianer, a student at Kansas State Teachers College in Emporia, Kan., who runs that school's campus speakers program. "The students here are not that interested. We want to get into wider

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areas. Social things and black things are pretty big."

The American Program Bureau reports a long list of dates for pro-abortion speaker William R. Baird Jr. The University of Pittsburgh is using \$5,000 from its \$24,000 annual speaker budget this month for a four-day session on prison reform with authorities who normally travel the lecture circuit.

"I think there is a trend away from having a guy come in and do his one-hour bit and leave," said Dennis Concilia, Pittsburgh's pro

gram commissioner. "It is rather unproductive. We are looking for something more from our speakers."

Black poetess Nikki Giovanni is one of the hotter properties on the college circuit. Her fee went from \$750 last year to \$2,000 this fall, said Richard Fulton, head of the New York agency that handles her. Charles G. Hurst Jr., president of Malcolm X College in Chicago, is strong on campuses throughout the country, especially with black student groups.

"A couple of years ago, the South would have been reluctant to book a black personality," said Fulton. "Now the barriers are down. Across the board, on all speakers, things have loosened up."

The fees garnered by campus speakers range from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars. Nader, Gregory and Georgia State Rep. Julian Bond, the top attractions on campus, get up to \$4,000 an appearance, said Walker, whose agency handles all of them, but they will often scale down fees or appear for free.

The speaker business is big business. Walker said the American Program Bureau will bill \$4 million this year, with the company retaining 20 to 40 per cent. The speakers use the agencies to avoid the paperwork

Cheap

of dealing with scores of individual colleges.

Much of the demand for speakers comes from smaller, out-of-the-way schools. "We get more requests from schools outside metropolitan areas," said Walker. "It is the small state schools, the Midwest schools, schools outside the area where they see these people regularly that are the most active in booking speakers."

For a popular speaker, the campus scene can be a lucrative source of income. Nader speaks at an average of a half dozen colleges a week. As is the case with many speakers, however, much of his income goes to his organization. "You don't mind paying a Nader or a Gregory when you know they are using the money to support causes you believe in," said Pittsburgh's Concilia.

The nostalgia kick has hit the colleges. Pinky Lee, zany children's television star of the 1950s, draws well with a lecture on the art of slapstick. Buster Crabbe is doing well with a package that includes his early Tarzan and Flash Gordon movies.

"We could not get Howdy Doody, so we had Buffalo Bob Smith. He was tremendous," said John Fahey, director of student union activities at the University of Hartford in Connecticut. "The students really get into it. They enjoy seeing someone who was important to them when they were children."

Smith was the puppet's sidekick on the popular children's television show in the 1950s.